DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 386 414 SO 025 422

AUTHOR	Zurmuehlen, Marilyn
TITLE	Studio Art: Praxis, Symbol, Presence. Point of View Series.
INSTITUTION	National Art Education Association, Reston, Va.
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-937652-51-2
PUB DATE	90
NOTE	72p.
AVAILABLE FROM	The National Art Education Association, 1916 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091.
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Art Activities; *Art Education; *Art Expression; Art History; Childrens Art; *Developmental Stages; Educational Strategies; Elementary Secondary Education; *Experiential Learning; Learning Experience; Student Centered Curriculum; Studio Art; Teaching Experience; *Teaching Methods; Visual Arts; Visual Learning; *Visual Literacy
IDENTIFIERS	Symbolic Representation

ABSTRACT

This document gives anecdotal stories of child art making along with philosophical interpretations for art teaching application. Art making is seen as experimental. It progresses from action to intentional mark making, naming, symbolic representation, and finally to "presence", an aesthetic creation experience that combines seeing and feeling. Experimental teaching practices that respond to the learner as a specific individual in context are advocated. The 10 chapters are: (1) "First the Making, Then the Naming"; (2) "Art as Praxis"; (3) "Art as Symbol"; (4) "Art as Presence"; (5) "Essential Conditions for Making Art"; (6) "Experiential Teaching"; (7) "Making Desk Blotters with First Graders"; (8) "Changing Space with Fifth Graders"; (9) "Making Sculpture/Making History with High School Students"; and (10) "Epilogue." Contains a 46-item list of references. (MM)

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Studio Art
Praxis, Symbol, Presence

by

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ISBN 0-937652-51-2

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First The Making, Then The Naming

When one of my nephews was a little more than two years old I noticed him seated at the dining room table, intently involved in painting. As he covered a white piece of paper with stroke after stroke of orange paint, my sister asked what he was making. He replied, "It's orange." I think my sister hoped, because I was there, that he would say something a little more interesting, so she followed his answer with another gentle question. "I see it's orange, but orange what?" He continued to paint as he responded, "It's an orange wall."

My initial interpretation of this account was to view it as one more instance of a child's adept accommodation to adult expectations, but another story was enacted here as well. It is a story about the meaning of art for these two people at a particular moment in their lives.

The story of art that formed my sister's consciousness of what her son was doing is one that is taken for granted by many people in our culture. It cohered certain themes that resonate in a collective story: (a) Marks represent something other than their physical appearance; (b) what they represent is intended by their maker; (c) what is shared between maker and viewers is this intended representation; and (d) verbal language elucidates the meaning of what is represented.

First the Making

For my nephew, however, the story at first was something like, "I am painting orange." It is a story of action, of

doing, of an intention (to paint orange) realized. Like many children's actions, it was repeated again and again, but as each orange stroke overlapped its predecessor on the page, my nephew's doing subtly shifted into making. In the beginning, touching wet brush to the intense dot of orange paint in the box of watercolors, then moving the loaded brush from top to bottom along one edge of the paper, he simply made evident his intention—to paint. But this action, unlike those of running and climbing stairs that he also liked to do, produced a record of its existence, a change in his visual world. There was his mark, undeniably orange, mute evidence to support an interior response such as, "I painted orange." But in the everyday nature of human consciousness, intention, action, and realization are not discrete recognitions as they appear in reflective analysis. Instead, they merge and coalesce into a new intention, in this instance, one rather like the familiar "I can do it again" response we frequently see enacted by children. And he could, and he did, paint orange, again and again.

His orange, diluted and expanded by water, was not the manufactured orange of the watercolor box. Both were orange only in the abstract typification of language; in the immediacy, the here and now, of painting, each orange stroke may be experienced as particular, and subtly, or even distinctly, different. Succeeding strokes were progeny, not merely duplicates, of that first flow of orange, embodying many of the paradoxical resemblances and idiosyncrasies that characterize familial relationships. As the strokes of paint accumulated from my nephew's actions, they extended across the page, transforming the white paper into an orange one.

At some point in the rapidly repeated cycle of intending, acting, realizing, and re-intending, with enough orange amassed for him to recognize a slightly different intention, I suggest his story altered; its narrative evolved into an understanding more akin to "I am making the paper orange." Why might such a narrative alteration occur? In "Form as Metaphor: A Comparison of Aesthetic Structure in Young Children's Pictures and Stories" (1983), I developed the concept of repetition as the most rudimentary aesthetic structure, and clearly my nephew's repeated actions of painting established an emerg-

ing form on his paper. Another salient quality of repeated actions is that they happen in extended time, duration, and so may be occasions for acts of attention because, as Alfred Schutz recognized, such acts presuppose "an elapsed passed-away experience" (1970, p. 63). This elapsed time may be quite brief. "The awareness of the experience in the pure stream of duration is changed at every moment into *remembered* having-just-been-thus" (Schutz, 1970, p. 62). So an attitude of reflective attention may be experienced between one painting stroke and the next; it is not necessarily suspended until a painting is complete. But what conditions in this painting situation elicited my nephew's attention? I suggest that his apperception of both the qualitative difference among the orange marks and of the orange form emerging from their repetition distinguished his later marks from his earlier ones on the paper. His remembrance of just-completed painting actions, and so his capacity for reflective attention, was considerably enhanced by the presence of the visual artifact, his painting in progress, continually available for his apperception.

The primacy of doing or making, rather than of conceiving or naming, is evident in the circumstances of my nephew's painting orange. While unique in its particulars, it is a situation that shares more universal aspects with other individuals who make art at specific moments in their own life histories.

The originator instinct, so named by Martin Buber, is one such universal. "What the child desires is its own share in this becoming of things" (1965, p. 85). Not to be confused with mere busyness or activity, such originator experience involves making something which did not exist before, a particular orange paper in the instance I recounted of my nephew. Peter Voulkos said of his ceramic sculpture: "Most of the time when I work I work in the dark, but sometimes I have just a vague idea of something and I want to bring it into being" (Craftsmen's conference at Asilomar, 1957, p. 25).

Art work is made, brought into being, through an expressive act which Kenneth Beittel defined as "where the conversion from unreflective to reflective thought comes about" (1973, p. 56). The shift I inferred in my nephew's story from "I am

painting orange" to "I am making the paper orange" is an instance of such a conversion in incipient form. Ben Shahn conceived of these two kinds of thinking as dual people existing in an artist, with an "inner critic" as the locus of reflective thought. "On the one hand, the artist is the imaginer and the producer. But he is also the critic" (1957, p. 39).

In describing the development of her paintings, Susan Rothenberg spoke of alternating doing and reflecting: "Then I apply more paint, scrape some off, more paint, paint it out, paint it black, paint it white, paint it black again and I'm under way. I sit in front of it and think about it between all the painting, and then it starts clarifying itself to me" (Stein, 1986, p. 96).

Something like a transcendence of intentions, as I suggested in my nephew's painting, is manifested in art, and for adult artists in their verbal descriptions, when this conversion from unreflective to reflective thought occurs. "I don't know where the image of the cave came from in my paintings," Louisa Chase explained. "I knew that I wanted to do an opening on the surface of the canvas that was very physical, such that one could enter into it" (Stein, 1986, p. 100). Martha Clark detailed a similar transcendence. "I'll start with an idea and often end up with something entirely different. I might make a mistake while painting that will take me in another direction, and I'll use that direction instead of what I originally intended." She clarified, "I don't believe a power out there is guiding my hand," rather, "As I go along, the painting changes, and I have to change with it or else the painting will fail" (Stein, 1986, p. 62).

The concrete physicality of a medium is a basis for reciprocity between makers and their materials, a grounding for reflective attention that in my nephew's painting elicited his shift from doing to making. Anne Truitt recounted her astonishment at finding in an undergraduate biology class that she was able to draw. "I kept my pencil very, very sharp. I made the lines lightly, but firmly, bearing down just enough" (1982, p. 71). Intent on understanding and portraying the nervous or circulatory system of an organism, she observed, "Under my pencil, the lines *were* this struggle" (1982, p. 71).

The originator instinct, conversion from unreflective to reflective thought, transcendence of intentions, and reciprocity between makers and medium, all are constituents in this story of making art. But, there is another story as well.

Then the Naming

My nephew named his orange painting, "It's an orange wall," when his story of making art converged with his mother's story of what art means in our culture. In her story art is representational, a symbol of something beyond itself, the embodiment of meaning in material form. This understanding is echoed in Anne Truitt's undergraduate insight, "It interested me that inert material could be turned to the service of meaning. It still is a miracle to me that a pencil line, *ipso facto* a material mark, can have integral meaning" (1982, p. 77).

However, as Robert Irwin vivifies in his work and writing, marks do not simply have meaning, we give them meaning. In a 1978 paper at a symposium on Perception and Pictorial Representation, he asked, "What other reality does painting have except the ones we give to it by acting as if its representations, interpretations, and illusions were somehow real? All of these should more correctly be thought of as games of intersubjective meaning construction," he added (1979, p. 217). In his paintings, Rene Magritte brings to our consciousness the cultural conventions that we often take for granted about representation in art. Michel Foucault pointed out that "Magritte names his paintings in order to focus attention upon the very act of naming" (1982, p. 36). By calling into question our common acceptance of the link between language and objects, or, to put the matter another way, between visual and verbal representation, Magritte challenges us to reflect on what we are accustomed to think of as ordinary.

In his study of children's drawings from six cultures, Alexander Alland found little attempt at representation in drawings from Ponape, instead, "Most of the children in this study appeared to enjoy seeing some kind of design flow from

the pens" (1983, p. 96). He noted less interest in representational art in children from Ponape, Bali and Taiwan than in those from Japan, the United States, or France. Even when he questioned children from those first three countries about what their marks were, they did not respond with naming, and seemed to find his question meaningless. He concluded that "representation and symbolism are things children are consciously or unconsciously taught to do by adults and other children" (p. 214).

Alland tells us there may be cultures where naming is not a developmental progression from making, but in Robert Irwin's story of art in our culture there may be a third development—and then—"Seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees." In selecting this paraphrase from the poet, Paul Valery, as title for his biography of Irwin, Lawrence Weschler (1982) conveyed Irwin's assertion of the primacy of perception, his concern with presence, and his involvement with the immediate in art. For many adults, seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees may be a startling notion; my sister, for instance, was intent on eliciting a "name" for his painting from my nephew. Young children, however, do not have to forget a name in order to "see"—Irwin's and Valery's metaphor for experiencing the subjective perceptual presence so richly available to us in our physical lives. By late childhood, and certainly for many adolescents and adults, cultural conventions, abstractions transformed into unexamined orthodoxies for which "name" is a metaphor in the Valery paraphrase, often obscure or obliterate our phenomenal experience—my sister's story of art, in this account, did not engage her in the varied manifestations of orange paint that so absorbed my nephew's attention. Irwin intends, through his art, to re-engage us in such phenomenal presence.

First the making, then the naming, and then seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees are emblematic of three philosophies that are a grounding for contemporary studio art. Although each conception distinctively illuminates particular aspects of art, they can, and often do, exist simultaneously.

Art As Praxis

Existentialism, phenomenology, and parts of American pragmatism may be considered praxis philosophies because they hold in common, as Don Ihde expressed it, "the conviction that some form of action precedes or grounds conception" (1983, p. 9). This conviction is manifested in the emergence of diagrams from scribbles that Rhoda Kellogg (1969, 1979) documented for many years in the marking actions of pre-school children. In what I consider to be a recognition of praxis, Kellogg as early as 1955 postulated a phenomenon that may be described as a scribbling-deprived child— one who arrived at school with little or no conception of images, shapes, or their placement. By 1995 we may see even more art-deprived children and adolescents unless we acknowledge in our curricula and teaching methods that art making precedes and grounds our conceptions of art. Because they actively scribble or mark, not because they passively "grow" or "develop," children conceive of circle images from their circular scribbles and from their circular gestures of arms and hands that produced these incipient forms. And so it is with squares and triangles, crosses and more amorphous shapes that invite myriad appellations.

During the December holidays when my niece, Megan, was three years old her mother suggested that Megan draw one of "her Christmas trees" for me. On this occasion Megan was marking with a red ball point pen in a 4" x 6" spiral bound, faintly lined pad of paper. She turned to a fresh page and, maintaining the pad's vertical orientation, confidently drew two parallel zig zag lines, horizontally crossing the page. With equal verve she embellished each peak and valley point on these zig zag lines with circle shapes. Only then did she turn

the pad 90 degrees to draw what she described as the "box at the bottom," and finally hand the pad to her mother with an imperative, "You draw the star at the top." Here is art as praxis in its most familiar and fundamental form. Like many children, Megan made zig zag lines; then someone—a brother, or another child or a teacher at preschool, or perhaps Megan herself—noticed a resemblance between those parallel zig zag lines, when her paper was re-oriented to position them vertically, and the schematic representations of Christmas trees so abundantly available as images during that season of the year.

Megan's Christmas Tree

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Then she conceived, named, them as "a Christmas tree" and added details appropriate to this conception. What is noteworthy about Megan's image is that she continued in succeeding drawings to repeat the original actions that were a basis for her conception, thus re-enacting the praxis from which her tree emerged and allowing me to observe and preserve the process.

From existential and phenomenological vantages it also is some kind of praxis that "grounds the relationship between humans and their world" (Ihde, 1983, p. 10). Such a view of praxis is evident in the following recollection of her early art experiences by an undergraduate student: "Throughout childhood there were lots of materials available to my sister, brother, and me. My parents were thrifty people, never throwing away anything that might potentially be needed someday, somehow. There always was a generous supply of paper from my aunt, a secretary—thick manila envelopes of good-on-one-side scrap paper from John Deere and Company. My father encouraged us to use his workshop in the basement and taught us how to use his tools. My mother was a Girl Scout leader for a couple of years and went around town asking for odds and ends from various companies: accepting old wallpaper books, various kinds of ceramic tiles, yarn samples, empty boxes, and for years after she kept our home supplied with the 'stuff' of our creations. Due to the availability of 'multi-media,' we always were working on some project. We were busy, carrying out some plan, dreaming up some construction or program of action, manipulating materials that lay waiting to be incorporated. We felt free to embellish every activity, every day's work. I look back with such fondness to those times, to that art for life's sake. I didn't call it art. I was busy living, and living meant choosing how and what, with as much leeway as a child can have."

Maxine Greene (1978) agreed with Paulo Freire in advancing the notion that praxis is a dialectic between critical reflection and action. Such a dialectic is recorded in a portion of his personal cultural history written by a graduate student: "Up to this time I believed that what I was making was an expression of myself— that is, the art work was a subjective release. Yet, I had never really considered the daily activities

I performed as essential elements for my art. I got up every day and ran and then made sculpture, but never realized the connection. At that time my sculpture was made to be looked at and not lived. I began to realize how often I described things in terms of my perceptions of running, and that the physical construction of my work was a metaphor for the actions performed while running. I enjoyed this idea of identifying myself. In it I found possibilities for unifications I had not yet known between what I made and what I did. From this point on, the walls between making sculpture and living broke down." This is a dialectic between critical reflection and action, akin to Ben Shahn, as inner critic, realizing, "This may be art, but is it my own art?" Next, Shahn related, "I began to ask myself what sort of person I really was and what kind of art could truly coincide with that person" (1957, pp. 41-42). Anne Truitt, again recalling her discovery of drawing in a biology laboratory class, recognized that such drawing "demanded that through it I convey what I experienced. This cut the first direct channel between my experience and my hand" (1982, p. 71)

Art As Symbol

Suzanne Langer (1951, 1953, 1958) viewed symbol-making as one of the basic needs of people; she conceived that it accounts for their imagination, their sense of value, their interests in all sorts of activities that do not directly contribute to survival, and their awareness of life beyond their own personal concerns. According to her, symbol-making is rooted in the human mind's capability to synthesize, delay and modify our reactions, whether to objects, events, or other creatures. By interposing symbols between our perceptions and our responses, we construct order from the chaos of direct experience, and by means of symbols we can add the experiences of other people to our own.

Before Langer's work, which is summarized here in very abbreviated form, many theories of mind did not account logically for the persistence of magic, ritual, art, and dreams in human life. Her explanation is that our brains naturally translate experiences into symbols. Signs terminate in actions by animals, but the human brain's symbolic process is completed in the expression of ideas. She suggested that the use of signs is the very first manifestation of mind, human or animal. One example is the classical "conditioned reflex" where sensations function as signs of conditions in the surrounding world: the dog hears a bell ring and salivates in the expectation of food.

Langer considered that meaning may function as either a sign or a symbol. A sign is simply an indicator: it tells us that something exists, or did, or will in the future. It is a symptom, part of a larger event or of a more complex condition, and it signifies the rest to an experienced observer. We may hear thunder, in an example she used, think it likely to rain, and take cover, walk more rapidly, or close the windows;

it is an invitation to action.

People also use signs to represent, as well as to indicate things. When a person uses a "sign" as a reminder rather than as a cause for appropriate action, then it is no longer a symptom; it has become a symbol.

Symbols lead us to conceive their objects and we respond to our conceptions of them rather than to them as immediate concrete phenomena. Proper names are the simplest example. They also illustrate the division between animal reaction, which is nearly always signification, and human association, which is conception. A dog, in Langer's example, responds to a person's name as though that individual were about to appear; a human may reply with gossip, behavior unlikely to be indulged in if the gossiper immediately expected to see the named person. Furthermore, a proper name denotes an actual individual—it is associated with a conception that is unique to her or him. Denotation, or naming, is the commonest symbol function.

Any meaningful term has connotations, associations that the conception conveys. Thus, we are able to think about an object without its presence, without reacting overtly because the connotation remains with the symbol.

It is Langer's recognition of two forms of articulation, discursive and non-discursive, that emphasizes art and language as equally essential in human life. Language is her prime example of discursive symbolism because its constituents are presented *successively*. She likened it to a metaphor of clothes on a line. But visual forms, she also maintained, are capable of complex combination by human minds. They are non-discursive symbols because they present their constituents *simultaneously* and their structure is grasped in one act. These she called presentational symbols: in them, symbolic elements are understood only through the meaning of the whole.

The significance of the arts is their "vital import" rather than meaning in the sense that language has conventional reference. This import is the pattern of sentience, or of life itself.

In non-discursive symbols it is an idea of feeling that is articulated. The prime function of symbols in art is that we

make them as abstractions of life rhythms for our intellectual intuition; their second function is to allow us to manipulate concepts.

A work of art is a prime symbol because it cannot be constructed by a synthesis of elements—its total value is an emergent quality which is non-additive. It embodies the artist's own imagination of organized feeling, the rhythms of life, and the forms of emotion, while it offers viewers a way of conceiving emotion. For Langer, discursive thought gives rise to a theory of knowledge, while non-discursive thought makes it possible for us to construct a theory of understanding.

Langer's establishment of symbol-making as an innate capability of the human mind, including the presentational symbols of art, is a philosophical basis for the natural and nearly universal inclination to make art, even among young children, observed by such researchers as Lowenfeld, Kellogg, and Schaefer-Simmern.

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Art As Presence

Robert Irwin, a contemporary artist who immersed himself in the philosophies of Husserl, Wittgenstein, Sartre, and Schutz, has constructed a philosophy of art that is grounded in the primacy of precognitive perception. His thinking is manifested in his installations and he articulated it in a number of essays, often included in catalogs for his exhibitions. He questioned in one of these, "Notes Toward a Model," how our useful conceptual structures become hidden orthodoxies, and suggested what he considered to be "the crux of the problem, the process of a compounding abstraction, the process by which our perceptions/conceptions are carried over to mean something wholly independent of their origins" (1977, p. 25).

In one section of this catalog for his exhibition at the Whitney Museum of Art, "The Process of Compounded Abstraction," he detailed "the initial re-presentation from subjective being (private access) to objective being (public access)" (1977, p. 26). He outlined a progression from perception through conception, form, formful, and formal to formalized. *Perception/sense*, he defined as originary, undifferentiated sensation, not yet distinguished as sounds or colors. "We know the sky's blueness even before we know it as 'blue,' let alone as 'sky'" (p. 25). In *conception/mind*, mental operations by an individual isolate, but do not name, zones of focus: this shadow, that house, that horizon. Often characterized as intuitive thinking, this is a process of "re-presentation from the tactile form of perception to the forms of mental imagery" (p. 25). It is in the next stage, *form/physical compound*, that he proposed meaning occurs. At this level of abstraction we are able to communicate because we give "our mental forms an equivalent re-presentation in physical form, i.e. symbol, act, or thing" (p. 26). In the *formful-objective com-*

pound stage, relational patterns are developed among these named things, for example, light and dark, large and small, hard and soft. In formful abstractions we generate contextual norms for such domains as behavior, language, and art. These formful norms are the basis for standards on which we make judgments. "History, for example, now moves from the oral story into the form of organized knowledge. By gaining the more formful—more abstract—written account, history now separates itself in method from its counterpart in the individual memory" (p. 26). Next, in the *formal/boundaries and axioms* stage, these patterns are reified, that is, mental constructions become reality—confused with life itself. They are standardized into such social usages as clock and calendar time, grammar, color wheels, and weight measures. At this level are formal disciplines, areas of expertise, and here we arrive, in Irwin's model, at the simultaneous validity of two vantage points: reason, which is individual, intuitive, and feeling; and logic, which is communal, intellectual, and mental. Irwin conceived that "each moves out from a separate and unique vantage point, and as such develops a unique perspective on and in the world. . . . each contributes what the other concedes" (p. 28). Finally, in the *formalized* stage, we have become completely estranged from direct perceptual experience and these standardized measures begin to dictate our behavior; we are tempted to treat categories as real substances. "Throughout history, in one way or another, we have compounded our reality into a formalized version, forcing the emphemera of nature into predetermined frameworks" (p. 29).

While Irwin pointed out the astonishing achievements in physical science and technology made possible by the efficiency and stability of formalism, he questioned its contribution to human and social concerns. Indeed, he thought of modern art as moving in the opposite direction, from formalism to perception. "Modern art challenges the overreaching objectivity of behaviorist formalism by insisting on the independent validity of subjective perception" (p. 29). He carefully qualified his process of compounded abstraction as a procedure without, strictly speaking, a beginning or ending; rather he suggested the image of a Mobious strip to clarify that

as individuals our experiential references may "begin" at any level and proceed in either direction, or even radially.

According to Weschler (1982), each of these progressive abstractions from perception to formalized truth implies, for Irwin, a loss rather than a gain; any gain in practical efficiency or social utility is accompanied by a loss of real information. He intends to interrupt such progressive abstracting and focus our attention on immediate perceptions by his installation pieces. In "Reflecting on the Ordinary: Interpretation as Transformation of Experiences" (1986), I described how artists of Irwin's sensibility intend to transform our everyday experiences by subtly encouraging our attention to specific situations, and considered curricular implications for art that may be derived from such a stance.

Possibly photographers are especially attuned to paradoxes of representation or abstraction. I reflected on one of Irene Grainger's colored photographs, named "The Fine Family of Teapots," in "Presentation and Representation: Here and There" (1985). When we look at her photograph, we see that like any fine family they record and display events from their everyday lives. The photo is represented to us as representing teapots, a pink one in the right foreground and, behind and slightly to the left of it, a dark brown one. But within that photograph another photo is presented, propped against the brown teapot. It reveals images of human hands, a saucer, and a cup filled with some liquid. So we have a photograph that represents not only teapots, but also another photograph, certainly an invitation for us to reflect on presence and representation.

Walker Percy, in his philosophical writings and especially in his novels, also extended Alfred North Whitehead's notion of misplaced concreteness to his concern: when we mistake an abstraction for the real thing, then that real thing is concealed, or in Irwin's terms we have lost presence to abstraction. For example, Percy described how the Grand Canyon itself is lost to many tourists. What is lost is an individual's particular, idiosyncratic vantage on the view, the canyon's presence. Such an experience is lost to the abstractions, or preconceptions, that visitors bring with them, "all too sure of

what they would see—their certainty based on the postcards, the geography books, the travel folders, the documentaries they had already seen" (Coles, 1978, p. 112).

Presence is what Robert Irwin explores in his art. Such art, he wrote, "is about seeing—about seeing, 'feeling,' and determining aesthetically. . . .It doesn't just happen to us—we make it happen" (1985, p. 20).

Essential Conditions For Making Art

Kenneth Beittel (1972, 1973) is the researcher who has studied making art, specifically drawing, most extensively and fundamentally. Since he regards an expressive act as "where the conversion from unreflective to reflective thought comes about" (1973, p. 56), his work to a large extent is based in Langer's philosophy of art as presentational symbol, but it is grounded as well in the praxis philosophies of existentialism and phenomenology, and through them to art as presence. From many years of investigating in-process art making and reflective recall, he identified three essential conditions for making art.

Artistic Causality

This is a situation where an artist feels like an "origin," not like a "pawn." Clearly artistic causality is strongly related to praxis philosophies—"I am what I do," or "I am what I make." Recognizing the importance of artistic causality appears central to artists and to many researchers who focus on spontaneous or self-initiated art of children, adolescents, and adults rather than on the products of assignments.

We can hear the imperative of artistic causality in Anne Truitt's words: "Artists have no choice but to express their lives. They have only, and that not always, a choice of process. This process does not change the essential content of their work in art, which *can* only be their life" (1982, p. 43).

Annie Dillard (1987) remembered her amazement at ten

years of age upon discovering Nicolaides' *The Natural Way to Draw*. Since she had no model, she drew her baseball mitt, day after day for that summer and every weekend morning into the fall. Following the schedule in the book, eventually what struck her was a realization that any subject could take any amount of time to draw and that any subject could be interesting to draw. The artist, the one who is drawing, determines both time and interest: "For many days, so long as you want to keep drawing that mitt, and studying that mitt, there will always be a new and finer layer of distinctions to draw out and lay in. Your attention discovers—seems thereby to produce—an array of interesting features in any object" (p. 79). Significantly, after mornings of drawing the mitt, she took it outdoors in the afternoons to play ball, thus integrating two kinds of praxis in her life.

For more than forty years, Rhoda Kellogg collected and studied drawings by young children. She stated that her search for meaning in children's art began while she was involved in Jungian analysis with its strong emphasis on interpretation. During her years of investigation she devised category systems for describing the various kinds of scribbles found in children's early drawings and for noting their placement on the pages. Her monumental work provides evidence that children manipulate these structural units in increasingly complex models as their actions are reflected back to them in visual images on paper. But why do they persevere in this activity until such refinements occur? It is easy to suppose that the first marks may be motivated by novelty and curiosity, but what sustains most children's involvement through several years of drawing? Kellogg said that a child "looks at what he or she has done and feels a warm glow of creation. Only a short time ago the paper was blank, and now in front of him or her is something that he or she alone has made, something that did not exist in the world before" (1967, p. 21). Surely, what she described is children as originators.

Artistic causality is manifested in more complex presentational symbols in the art of pre-adolescents. I have a collection of 78 books of drawings and stories made by one girl between her ninth and eleventh years of age. She began making

these books with a friend. Sitting together at her family's dining room table, each of them devised and drew, reshaped images from her own inner world, wrote, shared their stories, and then, confirmed by her own story and supported by the other's story, each began a new narrative.

Meredith's earliest books from these sessions are about a popular icon from her childhood— Mr. Peanut. On tiny pages, 1" wide and 1 1/4" high, bound together with two staples, she recorded a catalog of Mr. Peanut THINGS: a bank, a cup, a pencil, a rag doll, a sweatshirt, all extensions of this image into the world of concrete objects. Then on four pages using a larger 4 1/4" x 5" format, in a book entitled "Meet Mr. Peanut," she explored her understandings of this icon. "Mr. Peanut is made out of a peanut shell," she wrote at the top of the first page. At the bottom, under her drawing, she explained, "This is a peanut shell." "He has a hat, cane, and eye glass. He is green," she added on the next page and proceeded to make a pencil drawing that included all of these embellishments with the exception of green (a black pencil was used throughout). "Now look at him," she wrote beneath her drawing. On the third page she observed, "He has legs and arms." Then below, augmented with arms and legs, is her drawing of the image she reprocessed from the opposite page. "This is how Mr. Peanut looks," she concluded on the bottom edge of the paper. Apparently content that she had established Mr. Peanut's visual identity, Meredith covered her last page with a written account of the context for this image. "Mr. Peanut is a peanut. He is on many Planters jars and cans. He is on their TV commercials. He seems to like it. He sometimes dances, twirls his cane and other things." When I look again at the fourteen Mr. Peanut images with which Meredith decorated this book's cover, Mr. Peanut does, indeed, appear to dance and to twirl his cane; about the other things I am less certain.

Meredith's "Meet Mr. Peanut" book was the precursor of a twenty-two book series on Mr. Peanut drawn, narrated and numbered by their nine-year-old maker, along with "The Big Book of Mr. Peanut in the Winter," "The Big Book of Mr. Peanut in the Summer," "Mr. Peanut Comic Book at Florida," and "Mr. Peanut Comic Book at the Pet Shop." As the origi-

"Meet Mr. Peanut", book cover

nator of this series-to-be, its content, although not its subject, is quite different from those that follow. In all of the later books Mr. Peanut is a doer, the protagonist who goes to the bank (Meredith makes a joke that "Mr. Peanut is a bank. He likes to go to the bank and put money in."), to a restaurant, visits friends, sleeps on the couch, has a girl friend, goes for a plane ride, watches TV while eating dinner from a tray, flies a kite, writes a book, drives a snowmobile, opens Christmas presents, and goes to bed (a frequent ending). However, her first book is not about what Mr. Peanut does; it is about what, or who, Mr. Peanut is. Apparently, even nine-year-olds sense the importance of ontology: a concern with being. In Langer's

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"Meet Mr. Peanut", page one

terms, this book denotes an individual, Mr. Peanut, by describing what is unique to him.

The structure, or form, of "Meet Mr. Peanut" recalls Beittel's research into the drawing serials of young adults. Meredith's series of three drawings, the first of a peanut shell that is reprocessed and progressively added to in her next drawings, appear to be process representations of her evolving art work. Much like the time-lapse still photographs taken at intervals during undergraduate students' drawings in Beittel's work, both kinds of images reconstruct the metamorphoses or stages of development of a given drawing. Whether Meredith's verbal narrative is the access that Beittel hoped for to an

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He Has a Hat, Cane, and a Eye glass. He is green.

Now look at him.

He has legs and arms.

This is how Mr.

"Meet Mr. Peanut", pages two and three

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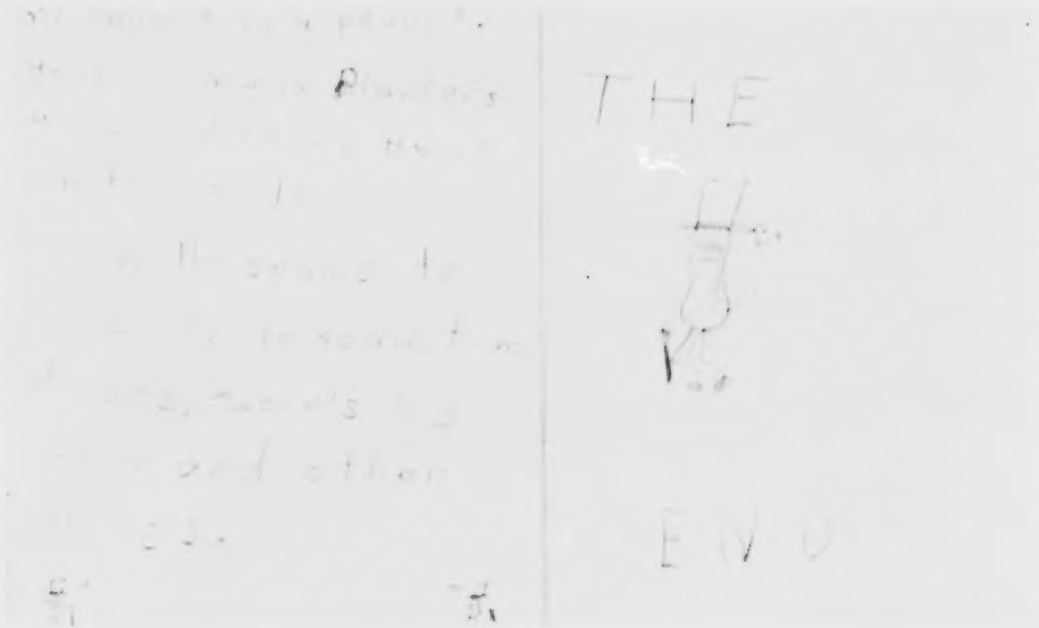

"Meet Mr. Peanut", pages four and five

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artist's stream of consciousness is difficult to resolve. Clearly, a written statement preceded each drawing in "Meet Mr. Peanut," suggesting Meredith formed an intention that is realized in the succeeding drawing.

Idiosyncratic Meaning

Beittel defined this condition for making art as affective and image-bound meaning. The expression of such meaning impels and guides an artist. It is subjective, uniquely bound to a particular person and situation. This situational uniqueness is closely tied to the philosophy of art as presence. In idiosyncratic meaning life experience, symbolically transformed by the mind, is the source of art.

When I took some rubber stamps to my five-year-old nephew, Sean, I watched him experiment with them, and then construct his own image-bound meaning. He tried printing a variety of stamps for several minutes, selecting each one from a box that contained about a dozen choices. Since he was sharing these with his brother the box was beyond his reach. When he wanted a new stamp he left his seat, walked over to the box, chose a design, and then walked back to stamp it on his paper. After several trips he selected a stamp with the image of a bird in flight. This time when he turned back toward his chair he began to make swooping motions with his arm that carried the bird stamp. After imprinting the flying bird image on his paper a number of times he stood up, walked around the room, and once again made the swooping motions with his arm; but this time it was the paper filled with bird pictures that he made to "fly." His next choice was a stamp of a locomotive. He accompanied its transport to his paper with a staccato-like movement of the stamp through space while he added sound: "Choo, choo, choo, choo." Once again he repeated this motion, plus sound, with the paper that now carried his imprints of the locomotive. Then he picked a stamp which represented a modern car. As he carried this one to the table his arm that held the stamp traced a smooth flowing line through the air around him, and he produced the engine sound which he usually made

while pushing one of his toy cars. And, again, he repeated these actions with the paper after he had stamped it with car images.

Langer maintained, "The first thing we do with images is to envisage a story" (1951, p. 128). Sean's spontaneous integration of symbols, from visual to movement to sound, undoubtedly was subjective and uniquely bound to the situation. But, his sequence of actions also implied a rudimentary narrative, a way of doing something with the stamped images. His unspoken, but nonetheless enacted, story may be structured something like this: "Here is how a flying bird looks. This is how a bird flies. I can make my image of a bird fly, too. And here is how a locomotive looks. This is how the locomotive moves. This is how the locomotive sounds. I can make my image of a locomotive move and sound, too. And, here is a car. This is how the car goes. This is how the car sounds when it goes. I can make my image of a car go and sound." With the exception of the last statement about each image, the narrative structure I have surmised from my nephew's actions closely resembles the form of stories in many children's books. But his final gesture with each image was more of an enactment, "I can do this," than is typical of those narratives for children that are written by adults. The whole occasion also was an enactment, of course, merging found images with personal symbolic actions, and culminating in an art experience where the whole was held together by cumulative activities and conceptions: "I did it. I can do it again with birds, with locomotives, with cars."

The idiosyncratic meaning necessary for making art is possible to construct in group situations, as well. A sensitive art teacher can nurture and structure such possibilities so that making art is an occasion for making objects that become presentational symbols. For example, Seonid Robertson recounted that she gave clay to an elementary class where the children had never played with clay. She explained that she wanted them to get to know the clay and suggested ways they might go about this: pushing their fingers in and out, pounding it, rolling it. She emphasized it was not necessary to think about something to make; she wanted them to "discover what

it will do and what it won't do" (1963, p. 4). Exploring and enjoying what the clay might do for the entire session was fine, she told them, or, perhaps, they would make something, squash it, and decide to make something else. "But if you find that, as you feel the shape you are making beneath your hands, an idea comes to you of what it might be, then perhaps you would like to bring out that idea a little more, to shape it into the form of the thing that is in your mind" (1963, p. 4).

For "the thing" to be in a child's mind it already has been transformed into a symbol; giving form to an idea moves it toward a presentational symbol. Clearly, Robertson's teaching method seems intended to evoke idiosyncratic meaning. It encouraged, as well, what Rollo May referred to as "participation in the myth of creation. Order comes out of disorder, form out of chaos" (1975, p. 123).

Her account resembles the play periods art educators in Osaka, Japan told me about when I marveled at the richness and sophistication of children's and adolescents' art work I saw in their schools. The play periods were times of exploration and experimentation with art media and materials. Every grade level began the school year with two to three weeks of such activity and art teachers returned to play periods at any time during the year if they observed their students' work becoming banal or academic. The art educators viewed these play periods as explanation for the high quality of their students' art.

Robertson noticed a strange arrangement of clay coils made by one girl in the class to which she had given clay for the first time. To Robertson the configuration meant nothing, but when questioned the girl said that it was a rosegarden. Then she traced a passage among the clay parts with her finger, describing the views in the garden as she did so. Robertson was struck by the contrast between those clay pieces that she could see and the meaning that the girl attached to them. Later she reflected:

> *That Margaret's garden bore so little relationship to the visual appearance of the gardens she knew (and she must have had a great stock of flower, tree, and other images if she had wished to use*

them) is now explained for me by the fact that what she was doing was re-creating a symbol, a focus through which her ideas and feelings could play (1963, p.76).

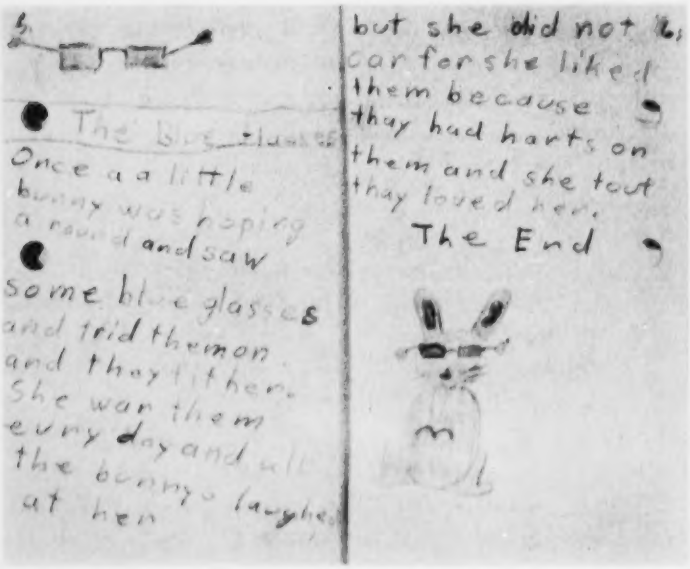
Lowenfeld structured series of questions about familiar situations, and their ordering was designed to elicit mental, and sometimes physical, re-enactment by children. When Lowenfeld conducted these rather elaborate sessions of dialogue, his purpose was not to evoke description, either verbal or graphic, but, through re-enactment, to stimulate students' expression. Lowenfeld's (1967) lists of topics for art were made up of everyday activities because his teaching technique was to draw on those familiar situations for remembering images that were subjective and unique to each child's circumstances. Miller, Galanter, and Pribam made a careful distinction between description and re-enactment: "Life is more than a thing, an object, a substance that exists. It is also a process that is enacted. We have a choice in our approach to it. We can choose to describe it, or we can choose to re-enact it. Description in its various ramifications is the traditional approach of the scientist. Re-enactment has been the traditional approach of the artist" (1960, pp. 213-214).

Intentional Symbolization

According to Beittel, this condition is an artist's desire to work over into materials some equivalent of idiosyncratic meaning, to use the properties of medium for personal relevance. Intentional symbolization synthesizes the situational aspects of each unique art process with artistic causality and idiosyncratic meaning. It directly involves Langer's philosophy of art as presentational symbol.

When she was ten years old Meredith, the originator at nine of the Mr. Peanut series, worked on a book of *Animal Stories*. Reflecting her growing knowledge of book conventions, it has a list of contents and numbered pages —seventy were projected; she completed forty-four. This collection re-

veals that Meredith has worked the conventions of bookmaking into a medium of personal relevance. Her inquiry into the meaning of things is less overt than in "Meet Mr. Peanut," but still evident in these later narratives. One, entitled "The Blue Glasses," is introduced by a drawing of rectangular lenses, completely filled in with diagonal blue colored pencil marks.



"The Blue Glasses"

From either side, brown stems project outward at nearly 90° angles and culminate in tiny red colored hearts. She wrote this story below her drawing: "Once a little bunny was hopping around and saw some blue glasses and tried them on and they fit her. She wore them everyday and all the bunnies laughed at her but she did not care for she liked them because they had hearts on them and she thought they loved her." Meredith's narrative begins with a glad discovery that turns into a dilemma when peers laugh at the wearer of the blue glasses. Her resolution is located not in action, not in the external landscape, but in an interior landscape where she decides how she will feel about others' actions. If peers laugh at her, she reassures herself,

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then she can decide not to care and to feel loved by the hearts. Notice that her happy ending, too, is a matter of choice: she thought the hearts loved her.

As an adult, anthropologist Loren Eiseley recalled making tiny clay skulls when he was a boy, inspired by skulls he saw in a museum. Eiseley remembered that, "Though I strove in my modelings for painstaking accuracy, it was only because without it the things seemed less real, less alive somehow. They were smaller than life, the size of big marbles, perhaps. Nevertheless they had a peculiar significance to me, a kind of being — the *anima* that exists in all properly shaped miniatures" (1971, p. 94). We sense that these clay beads were more than graphic descriptions of the skulls Eiseley had seen. After they were modeled he baked them in his grandmother's oven, and carried them in a bag to the barn where he assembled the burnt clay skulls in rows up on the cross-beams. It became his own museum, he said. "Only in my museum nothing was dead" (1971, pp. 96-97).

The situation for this art making was a boy, intrigued by an image of skulls in a museum, with a grandmother who cooperated by allowing her oven to be used for baking the clay skulls, and with accessibility to an abandoned barn that sheltered not only the boy's physical collection, but his privacy as well. That Eiseley felt himself to be the originator of his museum can scarcely be questioned, and its idiosyncratic meaning is especially apt in light of his adult profession. What makes this intentional symbolization a presentational symbol in Langer's terms is that, in their making, Eiseley recaptured for himself, not only these curious objects, but also his feelings about them and the museum. Here is the substance of personal myth—the holding to oneself of experiences, feelings about those experiences, memories mingled with reflections, all merging through increasing layers of new experiences into an individual's unique structure of meaning.

Experiential Teaching

In 1971 Charles Simonds began constructing miniature landscapes and abodes for what he called the "Little People" (The Little People, 1976). Perhaps, in part, because my own work is in clay, I was attracted very early to his concept and his ways of working, both of which he continued and elaborated on for several years. He made tiny clay bricks, one-sixteenth of an inch thick, and carried them and a few tools out into the neighborhoods of the lower East Side of Manhattan. By late 1976, when he began to show some of them in art museums and galleries, he had found more than two hundred and fifty suitable niches for his constructions which he thought of as "recently abandoned habitations" (p. 38). The sites were public: curbs, holes in walls, rubble. He reported that children surrounded him while he worked, first to stare, then to question what he was doing, and, usually, to "help" him by constructing their own annexes to his original buildings.

What attracted those hundreds of children to Simonds at work day by day on New York City's streets? Praxis: they wanted to know what he was doing. Watching him dip the clay bricks in weakened Elmer's glue and stack them in place with industrial tweezers, they quite reasonably concluded, "I can do that, too." Of course they could, and they did. But Simonds was doing more than merely gluing tiny bricks in position, he was making miniature dwellings. Having recognized a way, these children realized they could be makers, too, of their own buildings.

Techniques and processes are vital in realizing our ideas, but because such information is abundantly available elsewhere and its magnitude encompasses libraries, they are not the focus of this volume. So it is important to note that Simonds' praxis presented to these children the possibility of "how" to make.

Simultaneously, that "how" was embedded in "what" to make, both merged in the actions of making. In the presence of Simonds making art the possibilities for their own artistic causality, idiosyncratic meaning, and intentional symbolization were reflected back to these children. This is not an argument for an apprenticeship model for teaching art; it is a recognition of the experiential nature of learning in studio art, for our obligation as artist/teachers to ground the art experiences of our students in praxis, in the concrete and particular.

In an address to a national conference of teachers, Martin Buber told this story about a young teacher who entered a class independently for the first time. It is a story you may recognize either because you have read it, perhaps many times, or because you have lived a similar experience. The new teacher realizes he did not choose his students; they are assigned to him, but he *can* choose how he thinks about them. He chooses to think beyond what they appear to be at the moment to what they can become. What they are at the moment is disconcertingly noisy, troublesome, and impudent, all temptations to correct, to order, to make rules, to begin from beneath as Buber expressed it. Then the teacher notices a particular student whose facial expression appears to question the teacher in very fundamental ways: "Who are you? Do you know something that concerns me? Do you bring me something? What do you bring?" (1965, p. 112). So it is to this student that the teacher addresses his own question concerning what they, the class, talked about last in geography, and follows it with a request to tell about this. The student's response is not a pedantic answer; instead he begins to tell a story about visiting the particular place under discussion. In that telling the new teacher notices a change in the student's face and in the class. "They all listen. The class, too, is no longer a chaos. Something has happened. The young teacher has started from above," Buber concluded (1965, p. 113). This story has become a touchstone in education because it contains the essentials for authentic educational excellence. First, we understand, like the young teacher, that an individual's experience is the curriculum as Madeline Grumet revealed (Grumet, 1978). Second, the narrative affirms Burkhardt and Neil's insight that the "the main character

of the educative process is that it has a self-emergent direction rather than a dictated or preconceived one" (1968, p. 12). The painter, Fairfield Porter, reflected about the teacher he most respected during his studies at the Art Students' League. "He was a teacher. That is, he taught *you*, he didn't teach a system. He taught the person he was talking to" (Cummings, 1979, p. 128). Third, the boy's story is grounded in the concrete and specific, and the teacher's response supports the kind of knowledge that Barbara McClintock called shared subjectivity (Keller, 1983). In this class abstractions were not mistaken for reality.

Walker Percy, in one of his philosophical essays (1975), challenged us to reflect on what he sees as the alienating force of an over-reliance on abstraction in education. He constructed a story about a young Falkland Islander, and situated his protagonist walking along a beach where he chances to see a dead dogfish. Whereupon the young man pulls out his jackknife and begins to explore, we might say dissect, the dogfish. Percy's point in composing this narrative was to discuss the great educational advantage his hypothetical Falkland Islander has over some U.S. high school students who find a dogfish on their laboratory desks. Robert Coles interpreted Percy's argument in this way: Curriculum in U.S. high schools risks turning students into consumers, even tourists. Like tourists they journey from scene to scene— his metaphor for courses. In his scenario teachers may resemble tour guides, telling students where to look, what they are seeing, what they should think and say about what they are seeing. As for the dogfish "by the time the student has been given a 'specimen' of dogfish, then told what to look for and how to find it and what the 'exercise' (if it can be called that) means . . . the 'specimen' has been comprehended as a rather pedantic version of the reality" (1978, p. 116). In "Presentation and Representation: Here and There" (1985), I discussed how a too ready recognition or the easy comfort of "knowing" that an art work resembles others by the same artist, unfortunately, may transform our responses to art into reactions to specimens. Making art is at risk for a parallel deterioration in aesthetic presence. If idiosyncratic meanings are ignored or blunted, then chil-

dren, adolescents, and adults when they make art, as well as when they respond to art, see only categorically and hierarchically, losing presence to abstraction.

Lest you dismiss Percy's criticism as that of an "outsider," consider this observation reported in the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's study (Boyer, 1983): Students in a classroom were asked to measure the length, width, and height of a brick; they were given the value of its density in pounds per cubic inch. Then the teacher asked for the weight of the brick. Looking at the calculations on his paper, a student volunteered, "1016 pounds." The teacher directed this student to lift the brick, and then asked again how much it weighed. Once more the student consulted his paper and answered, "1016 pounds." The report cited this as an instance of failure "to make the connection between the problem and real life. Calculations were unrelated to common sense. This example was not an isolated incident" (p. 109). Abstraction was mistaken for reality.

Percy's solution is provocative. He proposed that poetry students should unexpectedly find dogfishes on their desks, while biology students should unpredictably discover sonnets on their dissecting tables. Obviously, Percy's enplotment is an allegory for his intention to move students away from their preconceptions. I take it, too, as an argument for recognizing many ways of learning about the world.

Artistic causality, idiosyncratic meaning, and intentional symbolization can become realities in art education in our schools through the kind of stance that led to the Nobel Prize for Barbara McClintock's research on maize. She explained, "No two plants are exactly alike. They're all different, and as a consequence, you have to know that difference. I start with the seedling, and I don't want to leave it. I don't feel I really know the story if I don't watch the plant all the way along. So I know every plant in the field. I know them intimately, and I find it a great pleasure to know them" (Keller, 1983, p. 198). Her account is one of the finest metaphors I know for an authentic approach to studio art or any other curriculum. It is echoed in Christine Thompson's conclusion to her study of experience and reflection in the education of art teachers: "The

responsibility of teaching can only be fulfilled by responding fully and freshly to specific individuals in the context of present moments" (1985/1986, p. 186).

Making Desk Blotters With First Graders

In the following account of his desk blotter experience with first graders described by Patrick Fahey (1987), we can see an instance where the primary story that guided these children in their drawings is one of art as praxis: they began with actions, their first intentions akin to "I am going to mark." Like Megan's tree their markings, at times, were a basis for conceiving, naming, certain images — horses, portraits, writing paper, stars, flowers, rainbows, written words and numbers, birds — and so moving into a story of art as symbol.

I looked back to my need to doodle, embellish, and decorate objects and environments in an attempt to personalize and make them my own. I knew that students today also have this need. I was aware of notebooks, desk tops and book covers filled with small drawings, doodles, and commentaries at Regina Elementary. I remembered the elaborate environments students created to transform their lockers while I taught at Wahlert High School in Dubuque, Iowa. The question I asked myself was how to bring these experiences to the school environment in a more acceptable manner for the teachers and administrators of these institutions. Certainly, I could not ask students to draw, write and doodle on their desktops, books and notebooks; or could I?

In a first grade class I passed out large sheets of paper and asked the students to help each other and work in groups of two. I explained that the paper should be securely attached to their desks with the masking tape, and the students proceeded with little difficulty. Soon each desk top was completely covered with paper.

When I asked the students if they ever drew on forbidden surfaces, a roomful of hands immediately shot up. "Your desks are covered and the rules set up to protect their surface are no longer in effect. You may treat the top any way you wish. It will remain covered for the next three days, and then I'll come back on Friday to carefully take them off."

I tried not to suggest images and approaches which might be used on the paper. Words such as draw, write, doodle, decorate and graffiti were avoided. This, I hoped, would allow for the natural progression and emergence of ideas and experiences.

Both first grade classes were eager to get their desk blotters back the following Tuesday. In each class I asked the students to push their desks aside and form a circle in the center of the room. As they did so, I handed back their blotter drawings.

Mike's Desk Blotter

> *Most of the time I drew them when I was bored or when we had free time. It was fun writing on my desk and not worrying about having to clean it off. I am not really sure why I drew all the stuff I did. I really like horses, that's why I have horses on my paper. They're over here. (He points to the upper right-hand corner of the page.)*

I asked about the words "New York City" written across the center of his drawing. "Well, we studied cities and one of them was New York. We talked about subways and freeways and all the people that live there, so I kinda drew that in the middle of the page."

As Mike talked, I noticed that he had made a list of the members of this class just above his "New York City." He was a very observant and quiet boy. I readily imagined him, his eyes wandering through the room from classmate to classmate, registering their names on his desk blotter as his eyes fell upon them. I realized that the words, "Baby," "Dad," "Mike," "Mom," and "Mali" had been written on drawn lines which carefully re-created the appearance of the writing paper used in first grade.

Andy's Desk Blotter

One of the more humorous drawings was done by Andy. Never at a loss for words and always confident, Andy's desk blotter reflected his personality.

> *I felt like being 'weird' the day we got this paper on our desks. It was really nice out and I wanted to be outside running around, not sitting at my desk. I guess that's me in the middle. I'm going nuts! Don't you like the way I made myself laugh? That's my phone number up there. I think I put that there so people would know who to call if I did something silly.*

Andy reflects the egocentric interest all small children have. To the right of his large portrait was a drawing of a figure with the words, "I love me," coming from the mouth, while a chorus of "Me-Me-Me. . ." emanated from the flying saucer on the right-hand edge of the paper. His interest in outer space was obvious. His humorous handling of it was fresh and uniquely Andy.

When I first saw Andy's work, I was attracted to the portrait drawn in the upper left-hand corner. Its sensitivity and realistic handling were startling. Seen in the context of his other images, it points out the diversified and inconsistent drawings children produce at this age.

Andy's "Desk Blotter"

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Renee's Desk Blotter

Renee's drawing was one of several that portrayed some stereotypical images. Stars, flowers, a rainbow and "IOWA" were repeated frequently over the paper. In a composition and theme similar to Andy's blotter, a large portrait occupied the center of her drawing. Renee commented:

> *Kristen and Katie are my best friends, that's why I have their names written down. I put their phone numbers on, too. We have a bird at home. Felix is his name. I like birds, that's why I drew this one, but it's not Felix.*

Drawing the bird absorbed much of Renee's attention. She used a resist technique, employing crayons and water-based markers. The effect accentuated a nest-like quality in the shape that framed the bird figure. Again, the sensitivity, detail and time apparent in this effort reflected the children's intense interest and need to draw and create images outside those assigned or required by the teacher or art class.

Renee's "Desk Blotter"

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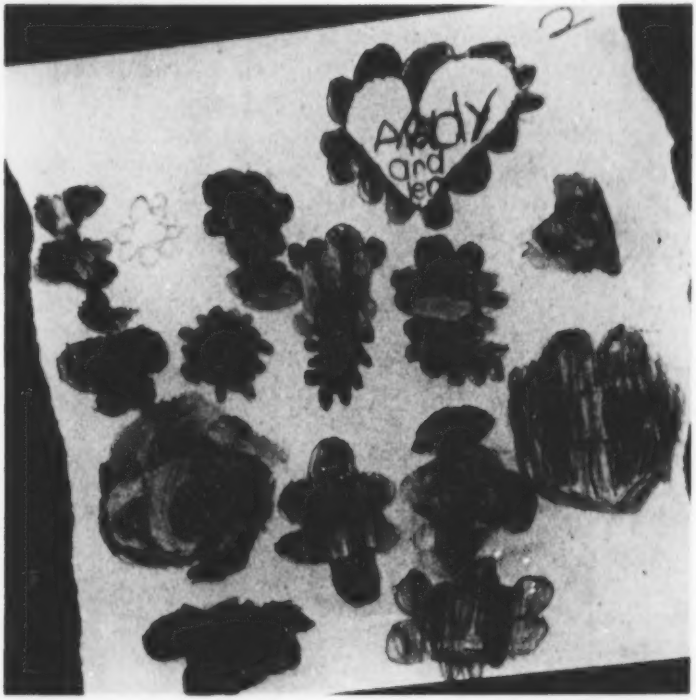
Brian's Desk Blotter

Unlike children who recorded friends' names, favorite subjects, and classroom events on their desk blotters, Brian combined idiosyncratic patterns, arriving at a much different image: one in the direction of design. His drawing is both exuberant and lyrical.



Brian's "Desk Blotter"

Throughout the discussion, students eagerly volunteered information about specific areas within their blotters, while other images remained unqualified. Many students were not sure why they had produced some of the marks found on their drawings. Yet, the freedom to do so emerged as the most important part of the experiences.

I also found that very few images in the drawings reflected

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the school environment. More personal interests outside of school, revolving around family, friends, likes and even dislikes, often were portrayed. The desk blotters appeared to have been used as a way to escape—even for a brief minute—the school environment.

Making desk blotters originated in Pat's praxis and in what he observed of his students' praxes; in addition, he structured this experience to be readily accessible. Children were able to choose when to mark or draw, and when not to mark or draw, over an extended period of days, a vital component of praxis and a condition that encourages artistic causality, but one that is difficult to achieve in many classroom environments. Freed from typical time constraints, these first graders also were not constricted by many of the usual conventions of finished pictures. Their "Desk Blotters" are not so much art products to be hung on refrigerator doors or displayed on bulletin boards as they are records— visual journals of their art making to be referenced for their future art making, the beginnings of personal artistic serials.

Changing Spaces With Fifth Graders

Larry Kantner and I decided to structure an art experience in which place, space, and change would be the media for a group of fifth grade students. We began by looking together at 48 colored slides of Japanese gardens, Nazca rock drawings, earth art, aerial views of construction sites, and natural changes. Some slides we saw were of Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, side walls of an Inca road built in the 15th century, the surface of a rocky cliff chiseled out for a U.S. highway's passage, a Japanese stone wall in Nara, the rock garden at Ryoan-ji in Kyoto, astronomical observation markings on a plateau in Nazca, Peruvian rock mountains with sand solidified in their gorges, tumbleweed and a dried branch on the sandy soil of New Mexico. At first the students talked about what they recognized. This is evident in comments they made while viewing a close-up slide of Minerva Hot Springs:

"It looks like a map."
"It looks like a thing of oil."
"Looks like a monster crawling on the wall."
"It looks like when lava came down."
"That's weird."
"That looks like a small island."
"It could be an island, couldn't it?"
"Looks like it's a little model of an island."
"Let's just say it's mountains and the kind of yellow-greenish is the fields."
"The rest is corn fields, dirt fields, things like that."
"Could just be a little model."

We asked them to consider whether the changes that each site evidenced were made by forces of nature or by people, and how these changes came to be. "Why do you think somebody

would do that?" We questioned while they looked at a slide of the rock garden at Daisen-in.

"To give somebody a message."
"For fun."
"What would be fun about that?"
"Like sand on a beach and you build it up."
"Looks like a huge sandbox."
"The sand has running lines."
"How do you get lines like that?"
"Sticks."
"Plow."
"Pencil. It would take a long time though."
"Rake."

At the end of the hour we made plans for a trip to Bear Creek Trail to look for changes there and to consider what kinds of changes we might decide to make.

Early on a Friday morning we parked at the entrance to Cosmos Park and, carrying rakes, hoes, and cameras —our tools —we began our traverse of Bear Creek Trail. Crossing a small, wooden footbridge over a low area of marsh and water, Sally noticed some watermoss. Skimming a few strands from the water's surface with a stick, she photographed the cluster, and then asked to be photographed with her discovery while holding it, arm extended at shoulder height, in a gesture reminiscent of a triumphant fisher with trophy.

Farther into a more deeply wooded area, we noticed beside the trail two vertical stacks of logs, one to our left, taller than any of us, and the other to our right, perhaps four feet high. Crudely sawed portions of trees composed these totemic structures, proclaiming to all beholders that they were crafted neither by experts nor by machines. The students looked, examined, and questioned: "Who made these? Why? What do they mean?"

Arriving at a central, open area, boys and girls began to explore, discover and photograph individually. Moon Moon climbed a few feet up a rocky outcropping to examine its surface and to secure a better vantage from which to photograph its convoluted faces. On the leaf-covered ground, outlined against a stand of trees, Todd noticed an abandoned, large, wooden

cable spool. With a tentative push he realized that, despite its size, it easily rolled. So he propelled his discovery to a resting spot, next to a horizontal slab of wood raised on vertical poles (vestige of a trail marker?) and already embellished with two crumpled drink cans. Satisfied, he photographed his changed space. Meanwhile, Sally found a battered and hole-ridden left, rear car door, partially hidden in nearby undergrowth. She enlisted Larry's assistance and, together, they situated it against a cliff wall whose surface also revealed battering, but from the forces of wind and water rather than from human efforts. After carefully positioning the door so that an extended bare branch of a sapling provided a view for its non-existent window, she recorded her established space in the swift movement of a camera's shutter. Ascending a diagonally inclined path, Phillip stood on a large promontory that jutted about ten feet above the area where most of the students were exploring. From there he surveyed a smooth, grass free, open ground below. Returning to this space, he selected a hoe and, pulling it toward him with firmly sweeping strokes, began to mark the soft earth with increasingly longer lines that culminated in a spiral or shell-like configuration. Crossing farther on to open ground, but still in sight of Phillip's hoe marks, Sunita placed a rock that appealed to her. Then she searched the perimeter for other rocks she could readily carry, establishing, after numerous trips, a circular shape whose closely placed rock boundaries were more than twelve feet in diameter.

Our next meeting was a planning session. Before this the principal designated areas around the school building where we might make changes. We went outside to look at these and to talk about them. Inside we listed materials and tools we would need for these changes, and drew up some plans.

Returning to their selected sites at our next meeting, Sally sculpted gravel into a mandala, or encircled radial; then she searched for twigs and branches to embellish the center, while Moon Moon refined the established image by adding or moving gravel with her hands. At another site Todd began to carry rocks, while Phillip brought some strips of wood they had collected. Together, they arranged the rocks into a serpentine line whose stacked mounds supported the vertical spires of

wooden strips, with the whole construction positioned to be viewed against a ground of densely cross-hatched lines formed by the verdant branchings of a tall hedge.

Todd and Phillip's "Changed Space"
(Photograph by Randall Miller)

Moon Moon working on "Changed Space" she and Sally constructed
(Photograph by Randall Miller)

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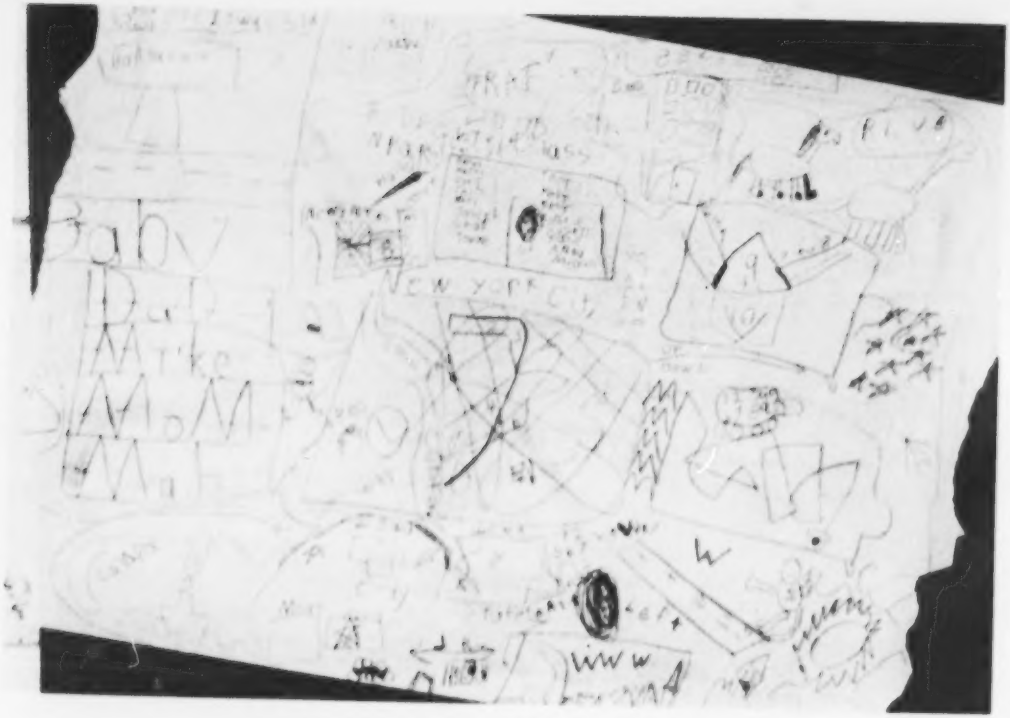

Mike's "Desk Blotter"

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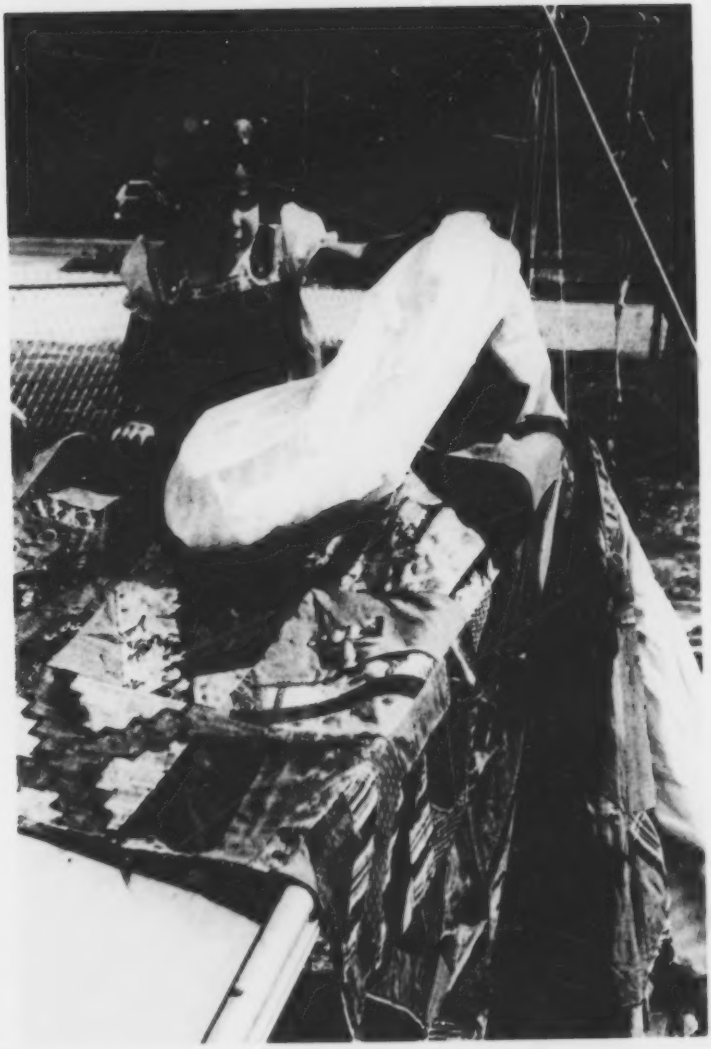
Clearly, the story of art that Larry Kantner and I intended to guide these fifth graders in their experiences of changing spaces was that of art as presence. We selected the 48 slides we talked with the students about at our first meeting to focus on ambiguity, to call into question too ready preconceptions about what they were seeing. From the diversity of their comments, such ambiguity indeed was evident: their beginning awareness that what we see "doesn't just happen to us — we make it happen," as Robert Irwin has worked so steadfastly to show us (1985, p. 20).

Art as praxis, however, was the paramount story that first shaped the children's experiences at Cosmos Park. Walking, looking, talking, touching, and climbing were actions of discovery, rather than reflection: they were doing, not making. Then their tentative explorations with hoes and cameras, their selecting and repositioning of rocks, cable spools, and car doors, and, finally, their recording these efforts in photographs moved them into reflective attitudes, into the province of expressive acts where they made their own presentational symbols.

From our experiences with very young children we knew that the praxis of even pre-schoolers involved making changes with objects they found in their physical world—examining and arranging rocks, or draping fabrics to enclose spaces as spontaneously as they marked or drew.

Preschool children selecting and arranging rocks (Photograph by Randall Miller)



A preschool child's draped enclosure
(Photograph by Randall Miller)

We relied on this originator instinct as a source for artistic causality in structuring "Changing Spaces." Idiosyncratic meanings began, of course, long before our class sessions in the individual histories of each student, but, in planning for diverse interpretations of the slides we discussed and in structuring our time at Cosmos Park so that exploring and discovering were paramount activities, we consciously cultivated possibilities for constructing idiosyncratic meanings that might be realized in intentional symbolizations back at their school sites.

These culminating changes had physical life spans of days or weeks, but we believe that the new perceptual consciousness in the fifth graders who made them is more enduring. The most valuable product of these experiences is the students' enhanced awareness of the being and circumstance that Robert Irwin considers "constitute the operative frame of reference for an extended (phenomenal) art activity" (1985, p. 28). We called this a personal sense of. . .once. . .now. . .then.

Making Sculpture/Making History With High School Students

Steve Rolls on Thunder-McGuire brings his history as a sculptor and a storyteller to sculpture classes he teaches for high school students. His integration of these two praxes originated before he began the high school classes. "When I was a visiting artist I carried a tow sack of stories about things I'd done that I made art about, all over Iowa, school to school." Next, he brought these accounts of personal adventures to teaching art in an Iowa City elementary school. "Behind introducing myself, through my stories of riding my bike and getting children to respond by reaching for their own narratives was a history of storytelling as the foundation of art teaching and making."

Before students begin his high school class, he writes to them as a way of introducing himself and of telling them something about the class. Here is the story he told them about his art in a recent letter.

Being curious about alligator snapping turtles, because of a sculpture I was making, and experience—I once caught one—I went to the library to find some books on them. Well, besides learning a mythical fact, that alligator snappers are "the most primitive living turtle and most like the ancestral form," (Carr, 1952, p. 3) a form that goes back two hundred million years, I chanced upon the following bit of information. "Two hundred pounds is most frequently mentioned as the upper weight limit for this huge turtle but Hall and Smith (1947) stated that in 1937 a specimen with the unheard of weight of 403 pounds was caught in the Neosho River in Cherokee County,

Kansas" (pp. 53-54). My grandpa and grandma grew up and lived on the banks of the Neosho River, around Oswego, Kansas—Cherokee County.

Not long after I read this I was in Oswego standing on the banks of the Neosho River with my grandpa's sister's son, my cousin, Merrit. Merrit was talking about times he'd fished the river and so I remembered the account of the record snapping turtle. "Ever catch any really big snapping turtles in this?" I asked. "I read where someone once caught a 403 pounder somewhere around here," I continued. Merrit then said, "You know, my dad used to tell us this story about a giant snapping turtle a guy that lived in town here once caught. Seems this old boy kept that turtle alive for sometime and on the day of the parade for the county fair, in 1937, he took this turtle and harnessed his tractor to him. That day everyone in Cherokee County came to see the turtle pull the tractor in the parade. Could be it was that turtle." I hadn't told Merrit the date of the catch mentioned in the book. When he said 1937 I figured that very turtle was evidently the one I'd read about. Later I asked my grandma about the turtle pulling the tractor. It was true. So, not only do alligator snappers bear the mark of destiny, arising as they did out of the primordial past, but they also pull tractors. Almost certainly this probably means something.

One thing for sure, coincidentally the stories of alligator snappers had taken me—though I had no idea that it was going to be full circle around: the banks of the Neosho. I'd been turned around and set right, as it were. In a sense, I returned to the beginning of the story. History and geography corroborated the stories I'd heard. And to think, I'd been making a sculpture about alligator snappers!

Right now I'm working on another sculpture having to do with turtles and tornados, about something my grandpa believed.

The point to my telling you this story is twofold. First, it's a way to introduce myself and my thinking about the art I make. The crucial matter of coincidence and consequence that prompts me to notice connections among what I'm now doing, what others are doing and things that have happened. Second, this might be the best way for you to begin thinking

about drawing in the workshop. In drawing class we are going to be putting together stories, ones that grow out of the past, ones that hold some personal meaning, ones that connect being curious about particular things. These may also be stories you chanced upon as I chanced upon the record snapping turtle.

Really, I want you to start now collecting in your head a chain of events and stories that, as you look back, connect and hold some personal meaning. Most meaningful stories, when reflected upon, connect you to a lot of people and many events, some which stretch into the past and some that go into the future — those that bring you to imagine new ideas or realize something of importance that's always been around but you just really never took notice of.

You might begin by considering an experience. For instance, I've ridden my bike across the desert, across the country. You can bet those trips found their way into my artwork.

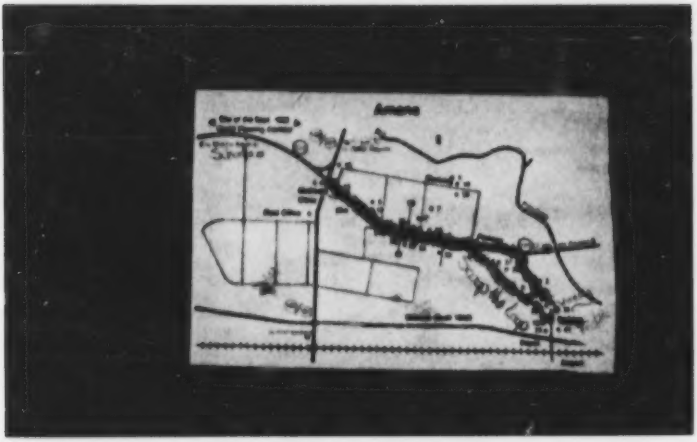
Take some time to write these stories down. Bring them with you.

As a visiting artist, an elementary art teacher, and in teaching drawing and sculpture to high school students Steve notes, "I responded to students' inquiries with stories." Notice, too, that in his letter he tells his future students a story in order to evoke their narratives. In his high school classes he asks students to make books in which they record their experiences, recall earlier significant events in their lives, and reflect on both in written and visual forms. Clearly, he intends these to be source books for their ideas. At times the relationship between a written passage and its embodiment in a student's sculpture is evident. But in many instances one image evokes another image in a student's book, perhaps awaiting intentional symbolization in some sculpture to be realized later. An excerpt from Jenny's is an instance of such linkage: "I used to pretend I was Mickey Mouse. I would stand in my bed wearing my dad's tennis shoes and talk like Mickey Mouse. I'd act like I was on T.V. and tried to teach people how to tie shoes. The only problem was that I didn't know how to tie shoes myself

. . . I used to have a pair of black cowboy boots when I was little. I thought they were pretty cool. I also liked the sound they made when I walked on cement and sand crunched under my heels."

In another story Jenny associated her recollections of an early making experience with possibilities for current constructions: "My dad and I were always building houses and palaces out of wooden blocks but I wanted to build one long enough for me to go in. One day someone brought over a huge box and I turned it into a drive-thru restaurant with an office inside. I was so excited! I painted it white on the outside and moved long, low tables, blankets and pillows inside along with candles and my booster chair. My mom and I cut out windows and made them look like they had window panes. We tried to glue a shelf sticking out of one of the windows for a drive-thru, but it fell down after a few hours. I loved it. Writing about it makes me want to build another one." Her concluding statement reveals the effectiveness of this method in eliciting artistic causality and idiosyncratic meaning.

These high school students also portrayed, in their books, the praxis of their daily lives, their occasions and situations, the substance of future recollections. On a page in her book Rebecca defined Scoop the Loop in dictionary format, authenticated with phonetic pronunciation in parentheses and an abbreviation to indicate its verb form. "The act of driving upon the appointed route. A scoop is usually done with the windows down, the radio on, and one or more friends in the car. The prime time for scooping is between 9 and 1 on a Friday or Saturday night, after an athletic event, or anytime you feel like finding someone to talk to." She delineated "the appointed route" on a map she attached to the same page. Another entry in Rebecca's book was completely visual information: a Xerox copy of her hand and the keys that are important to her daily life. The title on her book's cover—"FAMILY PORTRAIT/ This book is about my IDENTITY"—establishes her understanding that making history can be the basis for making art.



Rebecca's "Scoop the Loop"

Rebecca's Xerox of her hand and keys

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Rebecca's book cover

"By the time students began to work on art," Steve says, "they already had written or told me, a story about something that for one reason or another stood out in their minds. The approach was to have them work with stories of lived experience and refer back to anecdotes, accounts, and memories when they talked about their art work. I relied on their stories to stand for them as mine stood for me." And so they did. Their stories, their histories, were their own, and so were their sculptures. What they shared was the experience of making art from their histories.

An account in Patrick's book is an instance where the relationship between a student's story and sculpture is direct and evident. He wrote:

"Lincoln School, the only international school in Kathmandu Nepal, was where I studied from September to February, 1985-86. That year was, for me, a lesson on cultural and environmental issues relating to one of the poorest third-world nations of the world. It was like a majestic puzzle but missing some important pieces. The landscape was spectacular, the culture was rich, and the people were gentle—but so often poor and malnourished.

A large part of Kathmandu's tourist industry is trekking. Lincoln School supports five annual school-wide treks. The

destination of the trek I went on was Annapurna or Dahligiri Ice Fall. We were prepared to trek either mountain because weather conditions are unpredictable in the Himal.

The Himalayas are a diverse mountain range. There are many awesome and incredible sights - from raging rivers to calm and peaceful forests. In some areas glaciers even border small plots of terrace farmland.

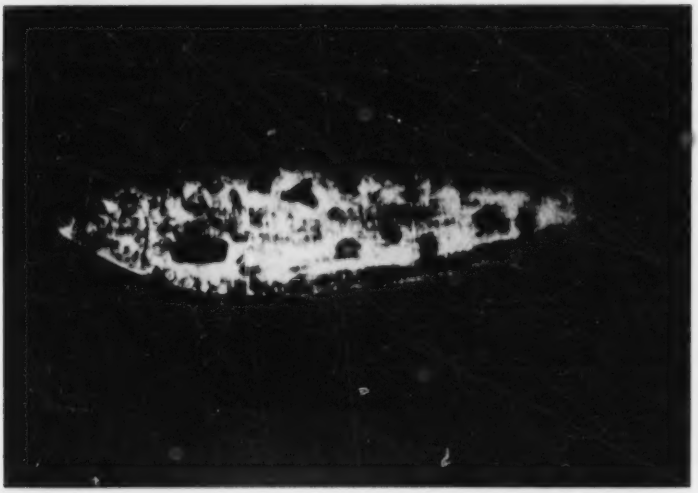
Our trek began in Kathmandu Valley. From there we drove to Pokara (a small town in the Annapurna foothills). In Pokara we hired a guide, sherpas, and porters to carry our enormous amounts of useless junk. We hiked for three days and then made the decision to hike to Dahligiri instead of Annapurna because the pass which led to Annapurna was buried in 23 feet of snow.

On the calm morning of the fourth day I woke up at six a.m. to the accented voice of Takra (a Sherpa guide) offering me a warm mug of milk tea. As I opened the dew-tickled flap of my tent, there was an awesome sight in front of my eyes. It was the stunning sacred mountain —Machupicharri, stark pink on the jet purple background of the morning sky. It was at that moment that I became fully aware of the beauty around me in

Patrick's "The Mystic Himalayas"

the vast and dramatic expanse of the mountains known as the Himal.

Randy also worked the idiosyncractic meaning he established in a particular story about fishing directly into an intentional symbolization: a sculptured fish as trophy.



Randy's prize fish sculpture

Here is his account from a part of that history, the source for this sculpture: "Last July 16th I got up very early and went down to the Junction Function to get into the fishing contest. I signed up and started to the place I was going to fish. There was a pile of logs out in the river that I stood on. There were big carp in there feeding all the time. I hooked several fish but lost every one. The contest was about over, and I had to go on to enter a food contest. I had only about a half hour left so I went where a lot of people were fishing and sat down. I had my line out for about 15 minutes, then there was a tug. I jerked and hooked him. I started to reel it in and it was a trout. I had to get to the other contest, so I left the fish with my mom. When I got back to the landing and won $10.00 for third place I found out that I had won the champion fishing contest for the scale fish contest. There were only two fish caught that had scales,

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mine and some else's that got first place with a half pound carp. It was a pretty good day; I had a lot of luck."

Intentional symbolization is paramount in this experience of making history, recalling and recording significant events in their books, and making sculpture that often was an occasion for these students to overtly work their idiosyncratic meanings into the sculptural media. For some students, however, establishing this personal relevance was more indirect; they constituted their idiosyncratic meanings from a cluster or chaining of recollections rather than from a single situation. Both responses distinctly manifest Langer's philosophy of art as presentational symbol. For her, it is memory that shapes our experience, allowing us to apprehend and value our experiences. "Memory is the great organizer of consciousness. It simplifies and composes our perceptions into units of personal knowledge" (1953, p. 263).

Although he does not call his student's attention to the term, Steve is engaged in a hermeneutic, or interpretive, mode of teaching in these classes. This method is grounded in two premises, one about the nature of art and the second about the nature of history: "The primary life of any art is in its presentation, the possibilities for interpretation that reside in and flow from it," and "Like art, the past is not merely a passive object of investigation but exists as a multitude of possibilities for meaning, to be transformed again and again" (Zurmuehlen, 1987, pp. 133-134). We see these transformations in the high school students' books and sculptures, and these works, in turn, invite continued interpretations from their makers and their viewers.

Epilogue

The foregoing stories of making art are not intended as scripts to be re-enacted by other teachers and students; they are possibilities, concrete instances of the philosophical bases for teaching studio art. Authentic teaching is specific to people at a given time and place, contextual, an enactment of particular teachers' stories of art and of teaching as these meet and cohere with their students' evolving stories of art. It may be valuable to consider adapting for our own situations art experiences that were successful in other classrooms, but to prescribe or impose these is very likely to violate the essential conditions for making art: artistic causality, idiosyncratic meaning, and intentional symbolization. For example, teachers recognize the prevalence of the sun image in children's pictures (Zurmuehlen, Sacca, & Richter, 1984), but there is a vast difference between such recognition of common interest in a subject and prescription of it. This interest is perverted in an unfortunate set of directions for a classroom activity, misleadingly labeled ART, that I discovered in a popular teachers' magazine.

> *Have available 18-inch squares of yellow, orange or red construction paper. The children free-cut a large circle from a color square. They paste the circle on an 18-inch square of a second color. The children then cut sun rays out of the scraps of paper from which the circle had been cut. They paste the sun rays around the circle. The rays should be arranged so that they do not touch each other or the edge of the circle. The children cut off any ray ends that extend past the edges of the square. With black crayon or marker, the children draw facial features on the circle (Your green pages, p. 103).*

Reducing the idiosyncratic meanings of children's sun faces to a conventional formula denies their artistic causality; the students become "pawns" of the teacher who, it may be noted, also is a "pawn" of the anonymous author of these directions. This unreflective busyness with materials substitutes a superficial *appearance* of intentional symbolization for the real condition. For children who may be subjected to such a situation it is virtually impossible to make art in these circumstances; they merely undergo an externally directed procedure that, estranged from idiosyncratic meanings and artistic causality, produces a kind of pseudo-art.

Making art, because it is experiential, can be a vital and accessible antidote for the malaise of compounding abstractions that threatens to alienate both students and teachers from lived reality. Madeleine Grumet described this all too prevalent condition in schooling as those occasions when "our theory becomes a diversion, a runoff for the energy that flows into discourse because it cannot be realized into action" (1978, p. 287). Students, parents, other teachers, administrators, and the general public expect that art students will be actively engaged in doing something, rather than passively pretending to listen, or surreptitiously reading or writing about more interesting subjects than the assignment, or devising other ingenious ways to occupy time until they are released. However, doing, devoid of the reflective thought that converts action into making, can be as meaningless as memorizing fragments of information or mimicking responses constructed by someone else. If artistic causality, idiosyncratic meaning, and intentional symbolization are essential conditions for making art, the narrative means by which individuals realize their own subjective stories of art, then reflection is the crucial key in establishing these essentials for each art maker, for the shared subjectivities of an art classroom, and for their contribution to the collective stories of art in our culture.

Studio art classes, historically, are situated in a privileged position in school curricula: there is a tradition for recognizing that their experiential learning can embody what I frequently refer to as the power of the particular, the conviction of the concrete. Such art classes are sites where energy can be realized

in action, students can be originators: intending, acting, realizing, and re-intending, combining critical reflection and action to constitute a praxis of art. They can be transformers as well, symbolically transfiguring the idiosyncratic meanings of their life experiences into the presentational symbols of art. And they can be reclaimers of phenomenal presence, attending to what usually is taken for granted and, in validating their subjective perceptions, they can understand that "seeing" is an aesthetic determination, we make it happen. Making art is as vital to curriculum as it is to culture: when we recognize ourselves in both of these spheres as originators transformers, and reclaimers, we participate in the sense of . . .once . . .now . . . then. . . that shapes our individual and collective life stories.

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